

Bill 413

Good Morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Service Committee.

I am Justin Kyle and this is my brother Jared. I am here to testify on bill 413, An Act Concerning Community Provider Rescue Fund. My mom wrote this testimony for all of us and me and my brother are here to deliver it. The Testimony is written from my moms view.

I, Meg Kyle and my husband have a son who is mentally and physically disabled. We have cared for Jared in our home for the past 27 years while raising three other sons and meeting the daily needs of each member of our family. We chose to keep Jared with us for many reasons. Some of the reasons are practical; such as, we feel, we are the best people to provide excellent care both medically and physically for our son. Some of the reasons are emotional and those reasons go without saying; we love our son and felt that we would see the most growth in his development if two loving parents, plus three attentive brothers were involved in his life.

When Jared graduated from "high school" in 2002, the State of Connecticut was then under a budget deficit and we were told there would not be money available for Jared to attend an Adult Day care program. We could go on and tell you horror stories about how the State of Connecticut treated us when we called out for help but we won't, because that is in the past. Instead, we chose to fight for the rights of our son. We quickly learned that the "squeaky wheel" does get results faster than someone who will just roll over and go away. Jared finally did enter the world of an Adult Day Care program.

At first Jared went to ACES ACCESS. It was an OK program but not great. Through our observations, we discovered that these programs were for the most part, glorified babysitting situations. This is NOT what we had in mind for our son. While we know what his limitations are,

we do believe that everyone in life has the ability and responsibility to "give back" to his or her community or family no matter how small that act may be. Jared is a kind and loving person and gives back to us everyday of his life. He takes pride in "helping" and we had envisioned a program where he could continue to learn and grow by getting out into the community. Unfortunately, this has not happened. Shortly, after Jared started at ACES, we received a letter stating they were closing the Community Experience Program, the very program Jared was involved in. After many long agonizing weeks, the ARC of Meriden-Wallingford stepped in and took over the program. It had been a roller coaster ride for everyone. My husband and I are constantly involved in Jared's care and program at the ARC.

However, the State of Connecticut makes life for us difficult. Because the State has not given Day programs a fair increase in funding over the past several years, our programs are facing difficult times. As a direct result of poor salaries, some of the people who are hired to care for our disabled sons and daughters are not reliable and are inexperienced at their job.

These individuals when hired are trained and work as "staff" members to watch and care for our adult children. Then, within six months to a year, they are gone because with a little experience behind them, they move on to a "better paying" job. When you cannot offer a "decent" wage, it is difficult to recruit quality people to work with our family members who need constant supervision. And, in turn, it is difficult to maintain quality people because the salary is so poor.

We are sure you and your families are facing the same kind of increases in running your own households as we are at our home. We all pay an exorbitant amount for gas and oil these days. Electricity is outrageously expensive. Food and health insurance is high. We are taxed to death in Connecticut. And, ironically, we live in the one of the richest States in our Country. What happens when your salary does not keep up with the demands of these skyrocketing costs and affects our care for our kids, how we keep warm in winter or how we pay our household bills? Do you tighten your belt and hope for the best? ARC, and other programs like it, is facing the same kind

of challenges with meeting the same increases we all are facing. Unfortunately, State of Connecticut has forced the Day Programs that service our mentally and physically challenged family members, to tighten their belts in such a way that they are now screaming for help from their Government. But our Government is turning its deaf ear to them. How can you do this? We need more money to help these programs not only to stay afloat but provide quality services, hire quality staff members, reward loyal dedicated staff, add hours to the day programs and provide greater community experience opportunities for our mentally challenged adult children that will complement our care here at home.

Our family compares ourselves to Governor Rell's new initiative; "ONE THING". Our Governor asks that we each do one thing in our homes and lives to make our State "greener and cleaner". Well, we have done our "one thing" to save on energy in our home. And, we have done a "second thing" to help our Government. We have kept our son at home; we, his family have sacrificed has carried the burden of his care for the past 27 + years. Over those 27 + years, our family has saved the State of Connecticut more than \$4 million by keeping Jared home with us. How many more parents are out there doing the same thing.... keeping their mentally challenged adult children at home?? All that we ask in return is that the State of Connecticut step up to the plate and do its "one thing" for our children and us. Please, do not deny the programs that provide Day Services to our adult sons and daughters with mental deficiencies the MONIES that will allow these agencies to provide a quality program that is safe and effective. We are doing our thing for our son, while at the same time, we are doing our thing to help our State by keeping him under our care. Now, we ask that the State of Connecticut do their "one thing" and that is provide the increase in monies to agencies such as the ARC who provide a much needed service to our son and others like him.

Thank you,